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congenitally incapable of understanding the art of government. The thing takes every conceivable turn, and it all seems true.

But when we reach the last of the five plays which make up the book—the one called *As Far as Thought Can Reach*—we get into a region where satire becomes pessimism in spite of itself. Human progress is here conceived no otherwise than as a hypertrophy of intellect accompanied by an atrophy of feeling. It is a shrewd and deep stroke which reveals all art as essentially a matter of playing with dolls; but the long-lived “ancients” of this play are really almost as distressing as the Struldburghs—those unhappy immortals imagined by Swift. They are so aimless that despite their vast powers they appear to be in a kind of terrible second childhood. The trouble seems to be that Shaw conceives the creative will, not as inner self and inner law in one, but as a kind of cosmic magic that may be used for the satisfaction of whim. Hence it is seen to be as lawless and cruel as the justly despised “Circumstantial Selection” of the non-creative evolutionists. Aimlessness strikes one as no better than mechanism.

Exaggeration, which is of the essence of the comic method, is illuminating up to a certain point, but breaks down and proves misleading when it deals with final questions. Comedy, the great revealer of human nature to itself, cannot conceive problems of destiny, and when forced to make the attempt imagines monstrosities, mere distorted figures, neither amusing nor significant.

THE MASTER OF MAN. By Hall Caine. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company.

There is no question, of course, about Hall Caine's new novel being melodrama. It has even the superficial marks—to such an extent that just as one has yielded to the appeal of a tale which—melodramatic or not—is well plotted and “strong”, one is jarred by some such cliché as, “Not a leaf stirred.” But it will not do to be merely supercilious. There is a real question about this novel—namely, Does its being *spiritual* melodrama make it better or worse?

The pivotal character of the story is Victor Stowell, son of a much respected and justice-loving Manx deemster, or judge. Victor falls in love with Fenella Stanley, the Governor's daughter—an angelic young woman; but during her long absence from the island, he commits an indiscretion with a young peasant girl, Bessie Collister. His honorable traditions constrain him to marry Bessie, but first he sends her to live with some elderly maiden ladies who undertake her education. Then two things happen, both seemingly fortunate for Victor: Fenella comes home and falls as deeply in love with him as he with her; and his best friend, Alick Gell, falls in love with Bessie. A little blind on the moral side, he conceals from Alick the fact of Bessie's misstep, and with a blindness less easy to understand, he is quite unprepared for what follows. Bessie is at

her mother's house when her child is born. In fear of her cruel step-father, she half intentionally, half by accident, stifles the infant. Her attempts at concealment are unsuccessful, and she is arrested. Stowell, who has meanwhile been appointed to the office of Deemster, is placed in the dreadful situation of being obliged to preside at her trial. He hopes to get her off, but Fate is against him, and she is condemned. Unable to endure the prospect of her death at the hands of the law, he, the judge, arranges her escape from prison; and she and the faithful Gell leave the island on a tramp steamer, which, fortunately for stage purposes, is able to anchor near the castle where Bessie is confined. Then, of course, nothing is left for Stowell but public confession, after which Fenella marries him in prison.

Certainly no author has succeeded in involving his hero in a more terrible false position. Whether this is exactly the method of Providence in the punishment of sin and the salvation of souls, one must beg leave to doubt. That process by which the consequences of a man's fault are pyramided, as it were, until at last he is made to bear the responsibility of a great mass of grievous consequences and collateral misfortunes and misdeeds, seems hardly fair—and hence scarcely legitimate material for a moral tragedy. Of course, if there were anything in the character or circumstances of Stowell to make his fate especially appropriate, the case would be different. But the contrary is true; in fact, the sentiment aroused by the story depends in large measure upon an arbitrary and unreal contrast between Stowell's character and the things he does and suffers. He is not a weak man; he is carefully portrayed as a strong man from his youth up—hero through and through. In a word, he sins but to be saved—in the most approved manner, by Providence and a good woman.

In certain parts of *The Master of Man* there is evidence of an honest dramatic skill such as may raise ordinary melodrama above contempt as an entertainment. This is particularly true of the court scenes and of the escape. A certain simplicity and directness of style, and a rather thin though persuasive effect of primitiveness in the Manx environment, deepens the impression. But the novel as a whole is condemned by its sham inevitableness and its reckless idealizations.

MRS. FARRELL. By William Dean Howells. New York: Harper and Brothers.

Nothing could well seem more unpromising as a scene for a novel than an old-time New England farm boarding-house—a summer refuge filled with “old fogies, decayed gentles, and cultivated persons of small means”. The life of such a place seems to have been necessarily trivial and insipid. Modern amusements had not been invented. The automobile was unheard of. Women trailed through woods and pastures in long skirts, collected flowers and ferns without the aid of “nature books”, gossiped, went to church, painted cat-tails, and when all else failed had more or less interesting spells of ill-health. Men